

# PRESS RELEASE

Press Contact

**Rachel Eggers**

Associate Director of Public Relations  
rachele@seattleartmuseum.org  
206.654.3151

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## SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM PRESENTS SOLO EXHIBITION OF ANIDA YOEU ALI

Tacoma-based international artist makes SAM debut in an exhibition exploring performance as an art form

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1300 First Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101

206.625.8900

seattleartmuseum.org



SEATTLE - The Seattle Asian Art Museum presents *Anida Yoeu Ali: Hybrid Skin, Mythical Presence* (January 18-July 7, 2024), exploring two celebrated performance-based artworks by the Tacoma-based international artist. The colorful, sculptural garments of *The Buddhist Bug* and *The Red Chador* series will be on view, along with sculpture, video, photography, and installation art capturing performances of the two works at site-specific locations around the world. Ali will also activate the works in two separate performances during the run of the exhibition. Curated by José Carlos Diaz, Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art, the exhibition marks Ali's SAM debut.

*Hybrid Skin, Mythical Presence* celebrates performance, public encounters, and political agitation as powerful art forms. In her work, Ali enacts mythical heroines as assertions of feminist, queer, and alternative visibilities. The two works on view reflect the artist's fusion of multiple religious aesthetics in order to provoke conversation about hybrid identities and offer new possibilities of spiritual expression. For Ali, the garments she and her collaborators wear are transformative; in fact, the artist considers them "artifacts" rather than artworks when not being performed. Her use of textiles is a practice rooted in her Cham-Muslim refugee migration experience, when she and her family fled Cambodia with only the clothes on their backs.

"SAM is thrilled to be working with Ali on this exhibition, which marks her SAM debut and the first solo show of a Cambodian American artist in SAM's history," says José Carlos Diaz. "It's also the Seattle Asian Art Museum's first solo show for an artist since the museum reopened in 2020. It's very exciting that these important firsts for the museum center on such dynamic and compelling work that tackles such relevant themes including the hybrid nature of identity."

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A creation myth springing from her interest in transcendence, humor, and spiritual turmoil, *The Buddhist Bug* comprises a huge saffron-colored creature extending nearly 328 feet (100 meters) in length. When activated in performance, a human face tightly encircled in cloth emerges at one end and a pair of feet at the other. The work reflects the conflicting experiences of displacement and belonging and explores Ali's complex emotional relationship between Cambodia and her transnational identity. Its bright orange color is the same one worn by Buddhist monks and represents Cambodia's profound Buddhist culture, while the cloth that tightly encircles the Bug's female face represents both the hijab worn by some Muslim women and the ethnic minority of Cambodian Muslims, to which Ali and her family belong. *The Buddhist Bug* has been performed in 10 countries since 2009, notably Sultan Mosque in Singapore (2015), Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon (2015), and Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane (2015). It will be performed at the Seattle Asian Art Museum on March 23, 2024.

Responding to a global rise of Islamophobia, misogyny, and racism, *The Red Chador* is an ongoing series of silent public performances that challenge perceptions and fears of the "other." Ali challenges fearful responses to a figure in a chador, a large cloth worn as a head covering, veil, and shawl worn by some Muslim women. More than simply an item of clothing, this work is an allegory for the hypervisibility of Muslim women and a means to activate critical conversations on identity. While wearing the sparkling red chador, Ali transforms into her alter ego, engaging an unsuspecting public through small interactions that evolve alongside society's changing political and cultural landscapes. Following performances in France, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Australia, and several US cities, the original performance garment mysteriously disappeared in 2017 while the artist was in transit from Tel Aviv. Two years later, the work was "rebirthed" alongside six additional sequined chadors in various colors of the rainbow. In presenting all seven chadors at the same time, Ali creates a space for Muslim women to collectively gather and exist for all to see. *The Red Chador* has been performed in 16 cities across seven countries since 2015, notably Palais de Tokyo (2015), the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center (2016), Haus der Kunst (2019), and Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design (2019). It has also been performed four times in the Pacific Northwest, including in Seattle on November 9, 2016, the day Donald Trump was elected the 45th president of the US. The latest iteration of the work will be performed in collaboration with six community participants at locations across the city including downtown Seattle, the Olympic Sculpture Park, Pike Place Market, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Seattle Asian Art Museum on June 1, 2024.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST



Anida Yoeu Ali (b. 1974, Battambang, Cambodia) is an interdisciplinary artist whose works span performance, installation, new media, public encounters, and political agitation. Born in Cambodia and raised in Chicago, she is a first-generation American of mixed Malay, Cham, Khmer, and Thai ancestries. Working transnationally, Ali investigates the artistic, spiritual, and political collisions of her diasporic, hybrid identity with the resolve that in-

betweenness is a powerful space for creation and provocation. Ali believes performance allows for a magic of reinventing the self and projecting “larger-than-life” personas liberated from oppressive representations.

Currently based in Tacoma, Ali is also the co-founder of Studio Revolt, an independent artist-run media lab whose works have agitated the White House, won awards at film festivals, and redefined what it means to create sans studio and trans-nomadically. Ali’s works have been acquired by public and private collections and globally exhibited, including at Haus der Kunst, Palais de Tokyo, the Smithsonian, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, and Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design. A recipient of the 2020 Art Matters Fellowship and the 2015 Sovereign Asian Art Prize from Hong Kong, she received her MFA from School of the Art Institute Chicago. Ali serves as a Senior Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington Bothell, with an artistic practice between the Asia-Pacific region and the US.

## PLANNING A VISIT

### **Museum Hours**

- Closed Monday–Wednesday
- Thursday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
- Holiday hours on the website

### **Admission Prices**

- Adult: \$14.99 advance / \$17.99 day of
- Senior (65+), Military (with ID): \$12.99 advance / \$15.99 day of
- Student (with ID), Teen (15–18): \$9.99 advance / \$12.99 day of
- Children (14 and under): FREE
- SAM members: FREE

### **Free & Discounted Options**

- Free Last Fridays: Free to all
- Complete list of discounts available: [Discount Access Programs](#)

Details are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on planning a visit, go to [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org).

## EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

*Anida Yoeu Ali: Hybrid Skin, Mythical Presence* is organized by SAM.

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**CULTURE**

**Image captions:** Live performance of *The Buddhist Bug* at Wei-Ling Contemporary Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2019, Anida Yoeu Ali, Cambodian American, b. 1974, image courtesy of the artist, photo: Nina Ikmal. *Abbey Road, The Red Chador: Genesis I*, Main St. & 102nd Ave, Bellevue, Washington, USA, 2021, Anida Yoeu Ali, Cambodian American, b. 1974, archival inkjet print, Image courtesy of the artist, © Studio Revolt, photo: Dylan Maddux. Portrait of Anida Yoeu Ali courtesy of Wei-Ling Gallery, photo: Leong Wei Cheong.

## **ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM**

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.